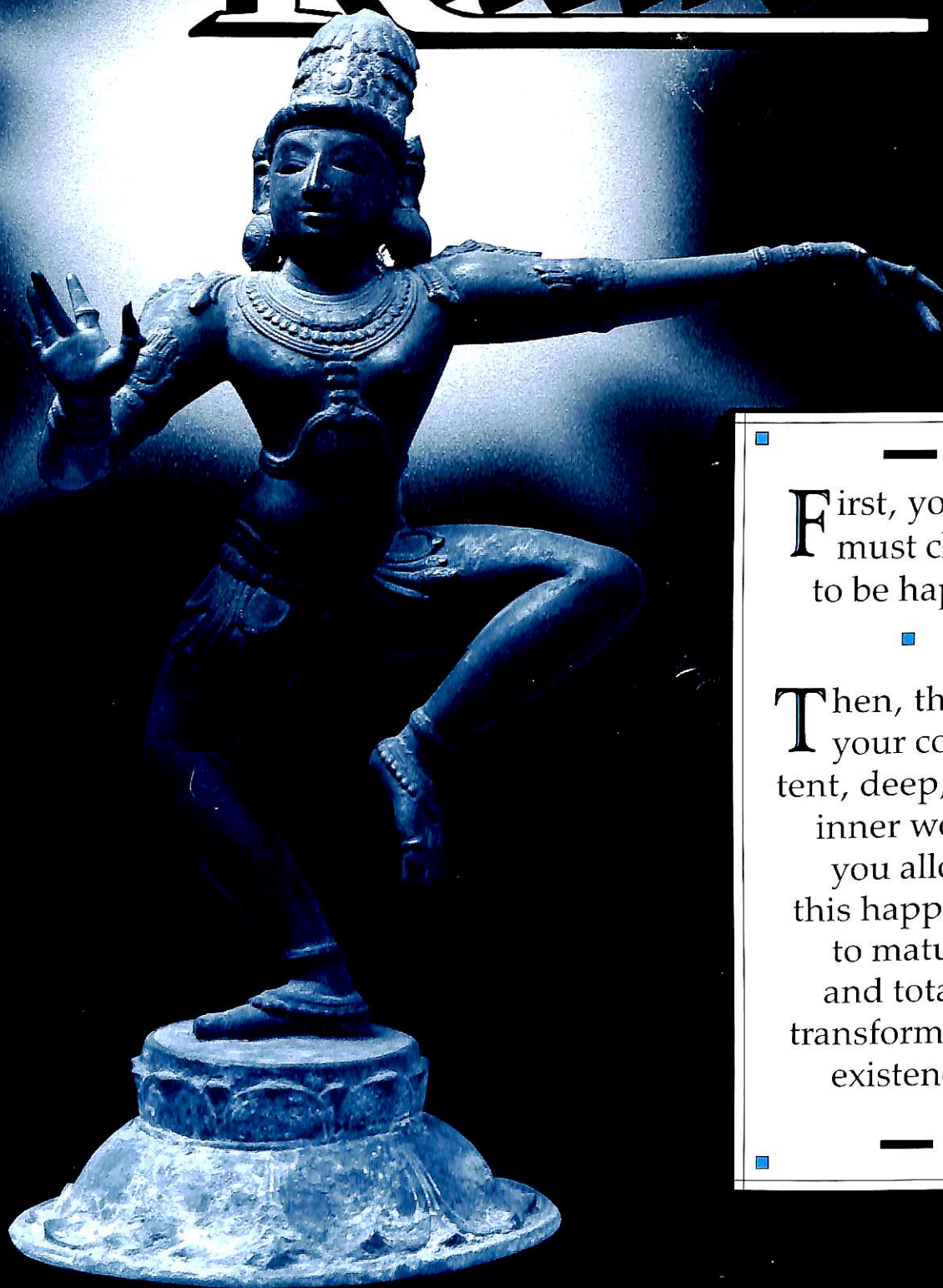


Rudra



First, you
must choose
to be happy.

■

Then, through
your consis-
tent, deep, quiet
inner work,
you allow
this happiness
to mature
and totally
transform your
existence.

NITYANANDA INSTITUTE

The Nityananda Institute, headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a non-profit center dedicated to the active practice of a spiritual life. Named for the Indian saint who is its wellspring and inspiration, the Institute is under the direction of Swami Chetanananda, an American spiritual master in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. The presence of this living teacher and the opportunity for sustained contact with him gives the Institute its unique character.

The Institute sponsors many programs, ranging from a full residential program to quarterly Retreat weekends to courses in hatha yoga. The heart of the practice is the daily kundalini yoga meditation program in Cambridge which is open to occasional and regular visitors alike, after completion of the Introductory Program. And for information and study, the Institute's Rudra Press offers a fine selection of translated texts and contemporary spiritual writing.

FRIENDS

FRIENDS of the Nityananda Institute is the resource development vehicle that helps support the programs and activities of the Nityananda Institute. Your financial contributions, volunteer work, or in-kind donations directly affect the Institute's ability to serve you, and are always gratefully received. If you wish to contribute to FRIENDS and receive a quarterly Newsletter detailing current and proposed projects, please send your tax-deductible donation to: NI/Friends, P.O. Box 1973, Cambridge, MA 02238.

ABOUT THE COVER

Cover sculpture, Bala Krsha, copper, 16th century, South India, Marianne Brimmer Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



The Nityananda Institute® logo is styled after a photograph of the young Nityananda, c. 1930.

APRIL, 1988 (VOL. 10, NO. 2)

RUDRA

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STAFF

Managing Editor: Aurelia Navarro

Editor: Patricia Slote

Contributors: Rachel Brooks, M.D., Per Johansen,

Barry Shulak, Sharon M. Ward

Production Manager and Designer: Leslie Goldstein

Production Assistant: Pindy Kutil

Photographs: Barry Kaplan, Marilyn Martin, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,

Patricia Slote, Bill Stanton

Illustrations: Sam Yoder

Cover: Leslie Goldstein

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Spiritual growth is a never-ending series of beginnings – new insights, new opportunities, the chance to express newly unfolding dimensions of yourself. And as in nature, no matter how tiny or subtle the signs of impending spring may be – or how dramatic and powerfully charged – in a growing person also the changes are inevitable and unmistakable, visible manifestations of the inner joy of being alive. Even if it wears the face of pain, our experience expresses the effulgence of life and the endlessness of creative potential. Knowing this, we can be happy no matter what.

The delight inherent in growth is present at every stage of development. The articles we have selected for this issue of *Rudra* demonstrate just how true this is. Take, for example, the articles by Barry Shulak, a relative newcomer to the Institute, and Per Johansen, who has been a student since he first met Rudi in 1969. Each expresses the magic of his early experiences, conveying with great integrity the endlessly fascinating, illuminating, even disturbing moments of self-recognition. What may appear to be struggle on the outside is exhilarating release to the person who makes the effort to shed the shell of ignorance and find his true self within. These are inspiring accounts.

Then look at the articles by Rudi and Swamiji. Rudi urges the continual destruction of crystallization through conscious effort. His article is filled with intensity and the pain of spiritual longing, just as strong in the few weeks before his death as it must have been when he was young. Swamiji, in a totally different style, assures us that through our quiet inner work the transformation we desire comes about, and deep happiness permeates our life. Both, however, make the same point: use your inner work to raise yourself above the fray and you will find permanent happiness.

The sense of well-being experienced by a growing person can be cultivated in every arena of life, as you will see when you read the articles by Sharon Ward, on hatha yoga, and Rachel Brooks, on nutrition. Sharon discusses ways to cultivate balance and centeredness through hatha; Rachel continues her fine series on nutrition by showing how to improve our physical state through careful observation of our diet. Increasing your self-awareness has definite advantages in the practical realm of everyday life.

As the season of spring matures, think about its greatest lesson: true happiness, the inner flower of growth, is possible every day.

THE RUDRA STAFF



Drawing : Shiva as Nataraja, Lord of Dance. Shiva dances in ecstasy to the eternal tunes of the cosmos. The dance itself represents the activity of Shiva as the source of the universe.

Lineage is a flow of grace that transcends time and space.



NITYANANDA

Nityananda lived in southwest India from the late 1800s to 1961. Over the years, he attracted thousands to the remote jungle village of Ganeshpuri. Why did they come? Certainly not because it was easy, since conditions were harshly primitive, and Nityananda rarely spoke. They came simply to be in his presence, and they were satisfied. Such a holy man is called an avadhut in Sanskrit – a living miracle of pure consciousness in human form. Timeless and eternal, the avadhut is a direct link to the Absolute, containing all teachers who went before him and all who follow. The grace of the avadhut Nityananda flows in our lineage.

RUDI

One of the thousands who visited Ganeshpuri was Rudi. Born in Brooklyn in 1928, Rudi had long been actively pursuing spiritual development when he went to India in 1958 and had the meeting with Nityananda that changed the course of his life. Returning to New York, he continued his flourishing Oriental art business while teaching thousands of students in the U.S. and Europe. One of the first Americans to be recognized as a Swami, Rudi was a totally new spiritual manifestation: a fiery fusion of East and West whose only interest was the inner transformation of growth and transcendence.

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Born in Kentucky in 1948, Chetanananda went to New York to meet Rudi in 1971 and immediately knew that this was his teacher. After Rudi passed away, Chetanananda became head of the ashram organization Rudi had begun. In 1978 he was initiated as a Swami, formalizing his unwavering commitment to spiritual growth. The opportunity for an immediate, personal relationship with a true teacher is a rare treasure. Swamiji, a thoroughly contemporary American, provides the living link to the timeless lineage that flowed through Nityananda and Rudi.

IT MAY BE SIMPLE, BUT IS IT EASY?

*A novice yogi tackles the Bhagavad Gita,
spaghetti sauce, and the blues.*

BY BARRY SHULAK



MARILYN MARTIN



ILLUSTRATION BY SAM YODER

Barry Shulak has been with the Institute since May 1987. He currently works as an advertising copywriter at Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

*For the discerning priest,
all of sacred lore
has no more value than a well
when water flows everywhere.*

— The Bhagavad Gita:
"The Second Teaching: Philosophy and
Spiritual Discipline"

I'm a simple guy. I humbly admit that everything I know about leading a spiritual life could probably fit on a standard index card. On one side. But simplicity isn't so bad. In fact, in simplicity lies the potential for great richness. Think of the Elizabethan sonnets or what Muddy Waters was capable of doing within a twelve bar blues format.

It's the simplicity of the *Bhagavad Gita*, I suppose, that intrigues me so much — precisely because that simplicity contains layer upon layer of richness. It's the same when I listen to Swamiji talk — it's like peeling an onion. For instance, there's a phrase he uses that sort of sums up what it means to live a spiritual life: "Everywhere I look, I see the face of God." For a spiritual novice such as myself, I think that's a pretty great place to start getting the lowdown on what being a yogi is all about. I keep hearing Swamiji say, "Just keep it simple."

But is this an easy task? Well, I'm not sure. For one thing, you see, I started my practice at a time when spirituality had already become a bona fide marketing phenomenon. Enough so that FM radio disc jockeys this past summer snickered at the "harmonic convergence"; enough so that my mother only worried a little bit when I told her I was moving into an ashram. I suspect I have every reason to thank Shirley MacLaine for this.

It's a Phenomenon

Anyway, spirituality is no longer a simple matter. It's a phenomenon — an event. What's a novice yogi to do? How do you keep something simple when the

huge wheels of American marketing start turning? For instance, say you go to the grocery store to look for a jar of spaghetti sauce. Spaghetti sauce is really a pretty simple thing. But it too has become a phenomenon. Unless you know precisely what you want, you could be intimidated by "the wall o'spaghetti sauce" you encounter when you get to the right section. Why, you can even buy spaghetti sauce in a jar that already includes the spaghetti. My friend Michael would point to this as proof that the United States is still a nation to be reckoned with. "Try getting *that* in Russia," he'd say. Hardly anything is simple anymore.

Our Perceptions Distort

And even though "living a spiritual life" is not necessarily thought of as just plain weird anymore, lots of folks (close acquaintances) have some pretty amusing misconceptions about my living in an ashram. One friend phoned recently wanting to know what I could tell him about crystals – as if I were suddenly an expert. My answer was stunningly concise: "Nothing." Several days later, however, this gave me pause. Perhaps I wasn't being fair. I made a mental note to do some reading on crystals, being fairly certain I'd never get around to it. But as luck would have it, shortly thereafter, I found an article on crystals in the *Boston Globe*.

Nearly all crystals, it seems, are made of quartz, which is a fairly interesting material. It's silicon dioxide formed in a crystal lattice – a compound with a regularly repeating arrangement of atoms. In the presence of electric current, quartz gives off very precise vibrations. That's why it's an integral component of the beautiful Seiko watch I got for my birthday last year. But this is all basic high school physics. The *spiritual* significance of quartz crystals is that they supposedly serve as conduits through which we can feel the energy of life. But, after giving the matter quite a bit of thought, I don't buy that.

It just doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. If there's anything capable of functioning as a conduit through which one can experience the energy of life, it's the human body. It's an incredible mechanism – much more sophisticated

than any crystal. Every time I sit down to meditate, I try hard to feel the energy pulsating through the seven chakras. When I first started my practice some seven or eight months ago, I frequently felt absolutely nothing. Now, however, I seem to be feeling something (other than my stomach gurgling), but the experience is very subtle. If this experience is so very subtle within the human body, in which the atoms are packed loosely relative to the rigidity of a crystal lattice, imagine how subtle the vibrations are within a crystal. So why bother with crystals? Even if it is possible to feel some kind of energy from them, why experience it through an unnecessary filter?

The other day, I was doing a bit of light reading and came upon an interesting passage near the beginning of the novel *Moby Dick*. It reinforced my thoughts about how silly it is to use crystals in a spiritual practice. In the passage, Ishmael, the narrator, says, "Methinks that in looking at things spiritual, we are too much like oysters observing the sun through the water,

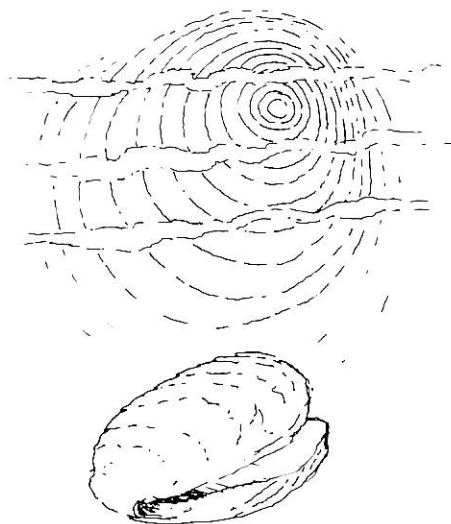


ILLUSTRATION BY SAM YODER

*"Methinks that in
looking at things spiritual,
we are too much like oysters
observing the sun through
the water . . ."*

and thinking that thick water the thinnest of air." I like this passage a lot. I like it because I think it's true that we increase the chances of distorting our perceptions of life when we turn to things external in a spiritual practice.

"Trust Thyself"

In his essay "Self-Reliance," Ralph Emerson wrote, "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." For a long time, this puzzled me. But I think I understand it better now. Meditation is a self-supporting activity. What more is there to say? And why should anyone buy a crystal when he can have a much more meaningful experience performing an everyday activity like taking out the garbage?

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna says to Arjuna that no one exists even for an instant without performing action: the qualities of nature force us to act. Well, ain't it the truth? A garbage can, for instance, has a finite volume. When it's full, you have to take the garbage out. And after you take the garbage out, you should try this neat little trick: trap some air in a plastic trash can liner and push it slowly down into the can. This displaces the air in the can and the plastic lies very evenly along its sides. High school physics at work again.

This may seem kind of strange, but it's simple, it works (it maximizes the volume of the can), and symbolically, it loosely mimics the universal expansion and contraction that is life. Very loosely. But c'mon, admit it. Isn't it kind of cool that – if you think about it enough – there's something more to taking out the garbage than just taking out the garbage? Like I said, I'm a simple guy. If you ever see me with a far-away look in my eyes, you can bet that I'm trying to find some meaning in something equally ridiculous.

The Desire to Grow

Sure, I get confused and disoriented a lot. I think it comes from questioning my previous assumptions about the way I've experienced my life. I think the confusion and disorientation are really types of pain. And the pain comes from the fact that although I want to change things about myself, I realize that such

change takes time. Tensions that have crystallized over twenty-five years don't disintegrate in one breath. And furthermore, I am very aware of the ways in which I resist change. The work involved in spiritual growth is a lot harder than I ever bargained for, and there are a tremendous number of

*But
through it all,
I've at
least found
something very
simple to
hold on to:
the desire
for growth itself.*

distractions out there. I'm finding that keeping things simple is not so simple. But through it all, I've at least found something very simple to hold on to: the desire for growth itself.

Bluesman Brownie McGhee – a contemporary of Muddy Waters – expressed this desire in a verse from the song “Dissatisfied Blues”:

When you see, see me laughin' —
laughin' to keep from cryin'.
Want to change my ways of living —
sure want to change my mind.

The blues is a grossly misunderstood form of art. For a long time, blues scholars like Paul Oliver have focused on the music as an expression of the pain endured by generations of black Americans. Certainly the music can be painful – earthy and sexy too. But shining through among all the grit and pain of the blues, you also find simple expressions of beauty like the verse above.

What the blues is really about is transcending the pain of day-to-day life. It's about doing the best you can with what you've got. And it's about finding redemption through the joy of music and sharing that joy with others.

It's not surprising, I think, that I tend to look for the “spiritual significance” in the art of others. Because I make my living as a writer of sorts, I place a high premium on expression and on being able to make sense of my experiences. But so many of my experiences lately defy description. I simply don't at this point possess the vocabulary or the intellectual sophistication to articulate them. I'm not sure that any of them are even worth trying to articulate. But that doesn't mean that I don't try. Even if I fail miserably, I'm sure that the discipline involved in at least making the attempt is a good thing. The one thing I do know for certain about writing is that you can never write as well as you'd like; you can only write as well as you can.

Out of this realization comes the desire to grow as a writer, and it's not at all dissimilar to expressing the deeper desire for the infinite process of spiritual growth. In fact, the one desire functions as a beautiful metaphor for the other.

Several weeks ago, I read the following in the *New York Times*. The words are those of author Chaim Potok, who just helped collaborate on a musical version of his novel *The Chosen*.

“You deal with a small and particular world – that's what art is all about. It's not about universals. You dig into that world with as much honesty as you can, and if you do it honestly and skillfully enough, somehow you are going to bridge the gap between your small world and all the small worlds of all the people who are going to encounter that world. And that's the most important part for me of the artistic endeavor – that bridging of worlds.

We all start in these small and particular worlds – the Christian world, the Jewish world, the secular world, whatever – then as we grow up we begin to learn about worlds outside our small and particular worlds. And very often

what we learn about the outside world conflicts with what we've been taught inside our own small world, and the conflict is an ongoing one. It's an everyday conflict. We have to learn somehow either to ignore it or to come to terms with it – not to be crushed by it.”

*I promise
to keep trying:
to stay
open, to keep
things simple,
to see
the face of God
in everyone
I meet.*

In terms of our hopes to have some kind of positive impact upon others through our spiritual work, we can say – even though we know otherwise – that each of us is a small and particular world. So it's not just in art, but in life itself, that we each try to dig into our own world with honesty and integrity. And in this way, we try to bridge the gap between our own particular worlds and those of others.

But will you remember this when someone cuts you off on Storow Drive? Or when the cashier at register number four barks at you that she's closed as you stand there feeling totally humiliated – like a complete dufus? I know there's a good chance I won't, but I promise to keep trying. I will keep trying to stay open, I will try to keep things simple. I will try to see the face of God in everyone I meet. I will try to see the face of God in everyone I meet. I will try to see the face of God in everyone I meet... ■

CULTIVATING GROWTH

HOW THE TEACHER WORKS

BY PER JOHANSEN

Remembering his years
with Rudi, a student realizes that a teacher,
like a gardener, provides the environment
and the nourishment that allow growth
to express itself.

Meeting Rudi in the fall of 1969 was the answer to my prayers. I was living in Brooklyn at the time, just finishing my undergraduate degree in art education and supporting myself through part-time work at a graphic arts studio. For years I had felt a driving hunger for deeper meaning in my life. I had experimented with many things: drugs, relationships, various artistic endeavors, but nothing brought much real satisfaction. I was always left with the feeling that the world was truly a crazy place, a place I did not enjoy very much. I felt like a leaf in the wind.

Then, at a Greenwich Village encounter group, I met a young woman who told me about the yoga teacher she was studying with. She said he was a successful oriental art dealer with many students and ongoing meditation classes. He sounded like a powerful and nourishing person; I was interested, and she said she would call in a week or two to arrange a meeting.



"Rudi was sitting at his desk
in the back of the deep, narrow store."

PHOTO BY BARRY KAPLAN

Six months went by. I didn't hear from her; her phone was disconnected. But the image of the man and the situation she described kept coming back to me, and I had a vague feeling of having missed an opportunity.

Out of the blue, she called. She had been out of town, but wanted to know if I still wanted to meet "Rudi." A few days later we met in the Village and walked to Rudi's store on 4th Avenue. The rush hour traffic snarled past Rudi's store, providing the usual New York City noise and sense of purposeful chaos. It was getting dark and a light rain was falling — everyone seemed to be in a hurry.

Entering the tiny store was like coming into a different dimension. The bedlam of the city was abruptly cut off and replaced by a calm, orderly atmosphere dominated by the quiet, rich presence of countless pieces of oriental art. The store was impeccably clean, and the pervasive smell of incense was in sharp contrast to the exhaust, smog, and grime of the city outside.

Per Johansen has participated in Institute life for over eighteen years. He is currently Supervisory Consultant of Coopers & Lybrand's Northeast Manufacturing Consulting Service.

Rudi was sitting at his desk in the back of the deep, narrow store, talking with a young man. I was struck by Rudi's physical presence — his large body and the striking shape of his shaved head. Sitting cross-legged in his chair, he looked like one of his own statues come to life, a living buddha.

The Seed Is Planted

As I approached him, Rudi turned and looked at me. In that look, a world was spoken and my world was forever changed. His look said, "I've been expecting you; I know exactly who you are." In that instant, it was as if his eyes pulled my whole being into him. I had never experienced anything like that before.

Rudi sat me down in a folding chair opposite him and continued his conversation with the young man. They were talking about how opening to the spiritual force gradually changes everything about a person, including the physical body. When I tried to join in the conversation like I knew what he was talking about, he looked at me kindly but firmly, and said: "Look, you don't know anything about this." He proceeded to point out a tightness — a small physical bump between my eyebrows — as an example of the point he had made earlier. He said this area would "dissolve and open as a result of spiritual work."

Rudi then taught me the breathing exercise and told me how to participate in his class — the open-eyed meditation sessions he held three evenings a week. My overriding sensation was that I was in the company of a very powerful force, that Rudi had within him what I needed in this life. He looked at me the way a master gardener observes a seed in his hand — as something small but interesting because of its great potential. There was no doubt about his commitment and capacity to fulfill the relationship that was being established at that moment, regardless of what I would happen to turn into as a result of his care.

Nourishment for Growth

From the beginning, Rudi treated me with intense kindness. He made a point of asking for my help with painting and repair projects, or with work he needed done around the store, making it easy for me to be close to the daily activities around him. He always thanked

me warmly for the work I did, and I felt more appreciated than I had ever felt before. I think it was his way of helping me feel qualified for increased spiritual awareness. Once, after a couple of particularly long hard days of work, he saw me looking with great interest at some very expensive Indian miniature paintings in his store. He asked, "Which one would you like?" Since I couldn't possibly afford any of them, I was dumbfounded for the moment, but he continued: "I know you don't have the money, but work another couple of days and you can pick one."

Soon Rudi suggested that I rent a small loft in one of his buildings next

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but interesting
because of its
great potential.

to his store, around the corner from the ashram. This was a great opportunity. It allowed me to come to meditation both in the morning and evening, and I had a standing invitation to have breakfast with Rudi and some of his other students every day. Often, I was invited for dinner after class as well.

Once when I returned from an out of town project (painting the house of one of Rudi's well-to-do students), he greeted me in the hallway: "Welcome home." It had not sunk in until that moment, but the ashram had truly become my home because he had so completely welcomed me into it.

Since I needed Rudi's kind treatment, and since he had it to give, he gave it freely. This inspired me deeply to work hard, both inwardly and outwardly. I

had no doubt that something very real and powerful was happening for me, that I was on the right track. My heart was opening, I was truly grateful to be alive, my discipline and capacity for work were increasing enormously, and my ability to extend myself to other people was much improved. I was on a roll, like a fat man on a great new diet losing the first fifty pounds.

Reaching Toward the Sun

It was amazing to be around Rudi every day. He quickly became the sun around which all my activities, every aspect of my life, revolved. On most weekends, especially during the summer, Rudi would lease a large station wagon and drive us all to the country ashram at Big Indian, in the Catskills. We worked intensely there, in the meditation classes, and on massive renovation and gardening projects. During the week in the city, too, many evenings were spent renovating various ashram properties. For all these activities, Rudi was the beaming center. He was magic, overcoming even immovable physical limitations. I remember one night when several of us had struggled for a couple of hours to install a huge stairway in the space between the first and second floors in one of the buildings. It was the end of a long day, and we were totally exhausted. It just did not fit — three people were pushing and jerking at the bottom, three at the top. We had huffed and puffed ourselves totally out of breath, but the stairs were simply too wide for the space. We were about to give up when Rudi appeared. When we told him the stairway couldn't be installed, he yelled, "Don't ever say it can't be done!" and proceeded to orchestrate everyone in a powerful harmonious effort. As the stairway mysteriously eased into the space that five minutes earlier was several inches too narrow, Rudi finished it off by jumping onto the bottom step in a tremendous leap. It was suddenly in perfect position. Rudi laughed; our mouths were open in surprise and wonderment.

Under Rudi's guidance, everything was a means of increasing my discipline, breaking down tensions, and manifesting the intensity of my desire to grow spiritually. So when he told me to start the first ashram painting and light construction company with one of his other

students while at the same time finishing my master's degree, I applied myself diligently to these tasks. One night during a lecture at Big Indian, Rudi glanced at me and said, "Do you think *Per likes* working as hard as he does every day painting and tearing down walls? He's doing it to qualify." I could not have received a better reward.

On the way to Big Indian on another occasion, I had a vision – a dream while awake – that crystallized for me the absolutely extraordinary quality, love, and nourishment Rudi was providing. In the vision, our station wagon crashed and Rudi was thrown out of the car and onto the pavement. It was very severe and it was obvious that Rudi would not survive. When I ran over to him, I was stunned by the look he gave me. Despite his broken body, with only a moment of life left, still he looked at me calmly, his eyes filled only with love, inner joy, compassion, and detachment. It was the same look that nourished me every day, in class and in the store. It was a look that said, "My love is unconditional – take as much as you need."

Getting Comfortable

With the constant exposure to Rudi and the many wonderful experiences that resulted during my first two years with him, I began to feel like I was really achieving something. In fact, it was as though I reached a plateau. I was comfortable, I began to feel satisfied. This, of course, could not last long.

One morning we were sitting around Rudi in the living room after breakfast. He was working intensely with us while watching the "Little Rascals" on TV. Sitting in his massive Chinese wood and leather chair and surrounded by rare oriental artworks, Rudi was a striking figure. Dressed simply in his standard orange T-shirt and khaki work pants, his physical appearance was still extraordinary due to his inner state of being, the fruit of so many years of intense spiritual practice. He seemed to glow, like a beautiful marble statue; his fiery eyes provided a direct link with Presence, the awareness that is the very vitality and foundation of existence.

Rudi worked individually with each of us, focusing on one person at a time by having them sit in front of him so he could work through the touch. When my turn came, I fell back to the floor

after he worked with me for a while. For some reason, I did not stay lying down very long to absorb the experience, as I normally would. Instead, I sat up rather quickly, like a spoiled child asking for more food seconds after having eaten a complete luxurious dinner. Rudi was furious. I had no idea what hit me; it came right out of the blue. His voice was pitiless as he thundered at me: "LEAVE THE HOUSE!"

The whole of Manhattan island shook. The new self I had so diligently constructed crumbled in an instant. As I walked out with everyone's eyes on my back, I was completely numb. My life

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had ended. Never before had I felt the rug so totally pulled out from under me.

I didn't know what else to do, so I sat down in front of Rudi's picture in my loft above his store and worked inside all day long. I worked just to open deeply, to learn whatever lesson was being taught, to accept whatever Rudi's verdict and purpose were. Gradually, through the exercise he had taught me, which I had used every day since I first met him, I conquered the tornado that had erupted inside – I became centered enough in the eye of the storm to feel that I could face Rudi again.

In the late afternoon, just before closing time, I ventured into his store to beg his forgiveness, to tell him how much studying with him meant to me,

and to plead with him not to cast me out. He was alone in the store, which was very unusual at that time of day. I approached him slowly, still shaky inside, but centered enough to receive whatever he would have for me. As I walked toward him, I was reminded of something he had often said in his lectures: "You may shit your pants from fear, but you'd better keep walking."

To my surprise, it was as if I were the only reason he were there at that time. It seemed that every ounce of his attention was on me as he stood up, came toward me, and put his arms around me. For the first time, I had the experience of two people becoming one; all tension dissolved completely. Up until then, I had always been aware primarily of the powerful presence Rudi represented when he hugged me. Now, he seemed as vulnerable as I was, yet he was completely above it at the same time. It was wonderful to be pulled up there with him.

I cried with relief: "I thought you were going to kick me out for good." Very quietly he said: "I love you too much for that." By now I was totally dissolved. Still, I added something I had planned to say: "I guess I was starting to take you for granted." "That's why I did what I did for you," he said.

Flowering

Before Rudi passed away, I received another unexpected gift from him. I had never thought that I had much of a chance to be a teacher, although I felt a certain calling towards it. But I eventually felt confident enough to ask Rudi if he thought I would ever be able to serve as a teacher. Without hesitation he said, "Within a year." It was the last thing he said to me. A few days later he passed away.

This promise gave me a tremendous lift and built my strength and confidence to face the future without his physical presence. It made me strong enough to accept what I now see as perhaps Rudi's last and greatest gift to me: Swamiji. Rudi had carefully prepared him to take over his own role; my chance to form a new relationship with him as my teacher is enabling me to complete my work and development in this lifetime. Through this relationship, I have been able to remain in contact with the Presence I first saw in Rudi's eyes. I am very grateful for that. ■

CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY

BY SWAMI CHETANANANDA

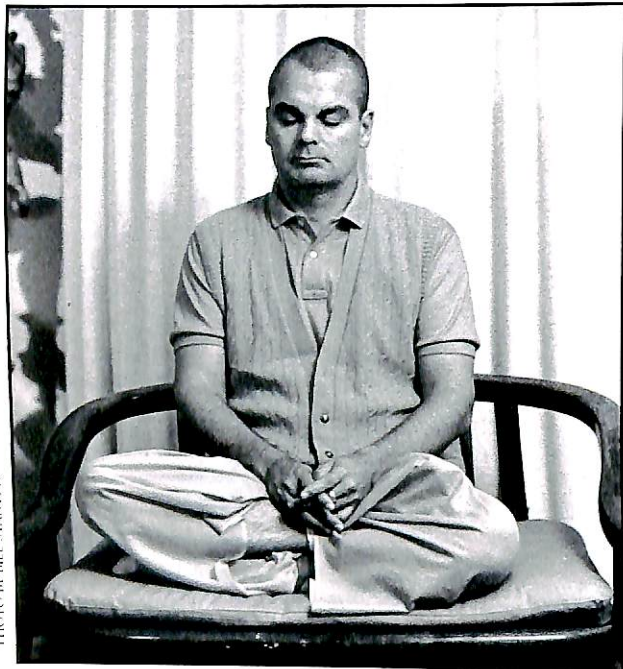


PHOTO BY BILL STANTON

First, you must choose to be happy. Then, through your consistent, deep, quiet inner work, you allow this happiness to mature and totally transform your existence.

The other day, someone sent me a letter that said something like, "I'm afraid of this thing and that." Later, however, when I talked to him directly, it became clear that the various fears themselves were groundless. What they really boiled down to was his fear of change. This, although he didn't realize it, was a part of what was making him unhappy.

"Yes," I told him, "fear of change is a real fear. In fact, there is only one thing worse, and that is to stay the same." In case you hadn't noticed, the world is not a particularly happy place, and people, with all their fears, desires, and pain are not, as a group, very happy creatures. But the point I was making with this person, and the point I want to make here, is that it doesn't have to be that way. You have a choice: instead of choosing to be afraid, you can choose to be happy.

The potential for deep happiness exists within everybody, and the vehicle by which a person comes to realize this potential has been given many names—Buddhism, Hinduism, Siddha Yoga, Kundalini Yoga. None of these names matters all that much. In fact, I would simply call the vehicle itself "quiet inner work."

It is through quiet inner work that you awaken, nurture, and cultivate the potential to be happy. In this way, you allow it to mature into a sweetness and abundance that transcend and transform the limits of everything you thought possible in your life.

In the beginning, this may seem like a complicated effort. Actually, it is quite simple. In a way, it comes down to this: you have to develop the ability to lift up your own heart every single day.

Existing and Living Are Not the Same

To put it a little differently, you have to cultivate the capacity to feel inside, and to keep your attention there until you begin to feel an opening up in the whole area of your heart. Only then does the heart really start to function. Only then does there begin to be some authentic life in this existence that you're passing through.

Remember that existing and living are not the same thing. Indeed, ultimate spiritual discrimination has to do with this one subtle but profound truth: existing and living are not the same.

Adapted from talks given in Cambridge January 26 and 28, 1988.

To exist is to be bound up in tensions of one kind or another. This, of course, isn't too hard because there are infinite reasons to be miserable and tense; everybody has reasons. But when you buy into them, slowly they become an inner contraction that crystallizes the flow of your energy.

At that point, you're not living a progressive life; you're just leading a reactionary existence dominated by tensions. Under those circumstances, how can your heart open? How can your creative intelligence — the essence of what you are — assert itself?

Excuses for Tensions

Still, even when our fears and tensions are making us miserable, people often continue to find all kinds of reasons to justify them, in order to avoid having to go through change. For example, one person came to talk with me who had been getting psychiatric treatment every day for the last thirty-five years. "I have a physiological problem," she said. "The doctors have told me that I am physiologically deficient."

I said, "Look, every single person who comes into this world is broken in some way or other. Everybody has some

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kind of physiological problem, the ultimate one being that we have a body. Think about it. We have to walk around in it, feed it, take care of it, and clean up after it. It's worse than having a dog. It eats more, get completely uncontrollable, and goes into heat more often."

This same woman had made it a hobby to take up with one therapist after another (the way some people shop for antiques, some play video games, and still others are athletic). As she was telling me about this, she said, "You see, I have doubts about my capacity."

I said, "I don't doubt your capacity at all. You've proved that you are capable of convincing half the psychiatrists in the city that you are crazy, and yet I know you are not." (This made something of an impression on her, because she knew it was true.)

In the long run, who cares what your deficiencies are? They are simply not important, so why waste your energy trying to find ways to excuse them? It's the inner work you do with what you've got that matters. If you do this work to the full reach of your potential, then no matter what your deficiencies, you will grow enormously and be transformed.

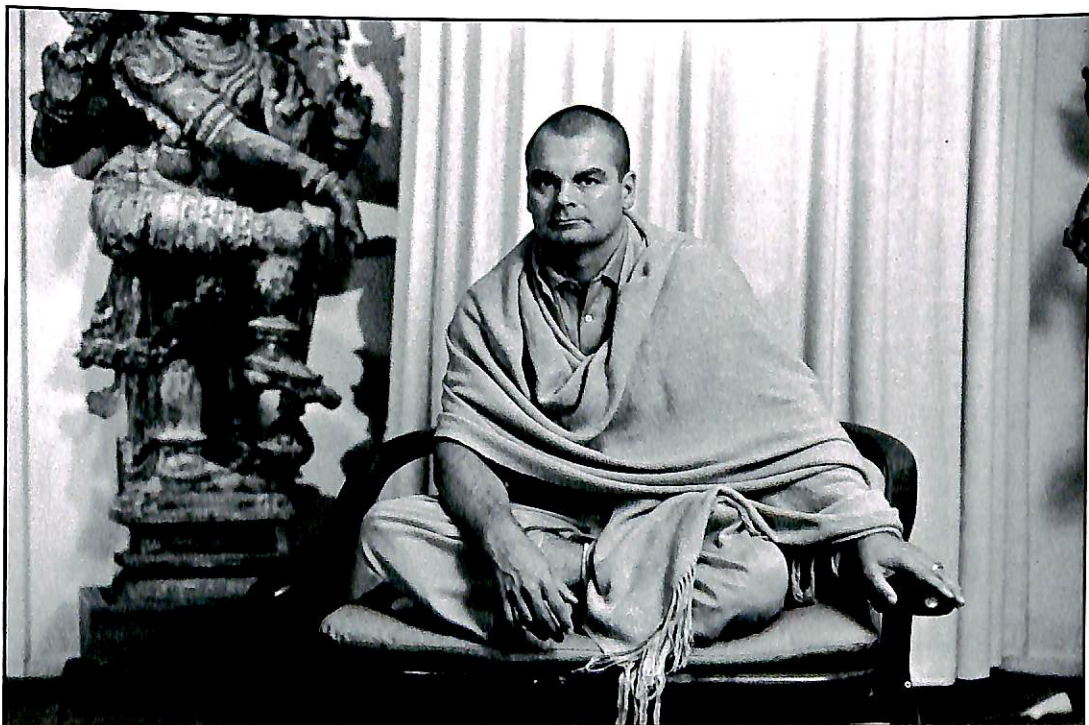


PHOTO BY BILL STANTON

Excuses for Not Doing the Work

Like the reasons for holding on to tensions, the excuses for not doing this deep, quiet inner work get pretty creative. Even so, they're often just one version or another of a letter someone else recently wrote me. In it he said that he had had a certain bad experience, and that this was making it difficult for him to undertake a particular challenge.

When I hear something like this, I have to scratch my head because, frankly, I don't think there is any such thing as a bad experience – or even a negative one. Every experience is simply as it is.

In saying this, I am not trying to be simplistic. I'm only saying that all experience is what we make of it. There is no such thing as a "bad experience" or, for that matter, a "bad person." There is only extraordinary potential everywhere around you, as long as you are willing to open your heart in each new encounter.

Stuck In the Program of Rich and Famous

People, however, often have trouble staying open to the potential inherent in all of their experience because they get stuck on one idea or another of how they think their lives are supposed to turn out. Most often, in their effort to find happiness and fulfillment, they get caught up in the idea that life has a program, and that this program requires them to succeed in the world. The next thing you know, they're crystallizing their energy around trying to become rich and famous.

Neither happiness nor fulfillment exists in being rich and famous (although I think a lot of insanity does). I have nothing against wealth or fame per se, but that doesn't detract from the point that they are basically irrelevant to happiness and fulfillment. To put it bluntly, they have nothing whatsoever to do with your inner work and spiritual growth, or with why you are in the world. Furthermore, they are not the source of authentic change.

What I mean is this: the reason why you function in the world is not to carry out some program. It is not to become rich and famous, or even successful. If these things happen, that's nice

– after all, you do have to feed your pet carcass. But you are really here in the world to try to understand the potentiality that exists within you.

You do your inner work to witness the power of this profound, creative capacity – the very essence of your existence – and to learn about its unfoldment. Not only is this the true source of change, it is what will ultimately enable you to go beyond your fear of change.

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and to grow.
You don't have
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and suffering.

The Short and the Long

Americans tend to have the hardest time getting this idea. We continuously think that we can define happiness, fulfillment, and success in terms of material things and public recognition. We constantly look for the quick way to do everything – we want results right now.

If we do reach the point of understanding that true fulfillment comes only as a result of change brought about by our quiet inner work, then we expect it to happen quickly. Somehow we think it's possible to get fast enlightenment – just one more form of painless, instant gratification.

The problem with this is that a truly successful life is not built solely on the basis of the short term. Indeed, if you constantly look to the short term for feedback about the quality of your inner effort and understanding, then you might as well hang up your skates, sports fans, because there is no way that this is possible.

It takes a long time for the subtle understanding that comes from inner work to penetrate the thickness that we are as human beings. In your own practice, it takes time for that work to reorganize deeply within you, and start to come out again in the form of change. It takes even more time for that to penetrate the atmosphere around you.

This means that you can't go around judging yourself by short-term standards and hope to come to any real understanding about anything. If you do, you will constantly be involved in the data lag that permeates every aspect of our lives.

Try taking the long-term point of view. Instead of looking for something to happen immediately, simply practice opening your heart every day. Open your heart, and try to live from a different place within yourself. Practice staying above the different tensions that present themselves.

You won't succeed one hundred percent of the time. Still, if you practice and work at it, then slowly you will dissolve more and more of the tensions within yourself and in your atmosphere. What is not alive in you and your life will fall away from you, and what is alive will regenerate and reassert itself more and more. This is the nature of Life.

The Point of Quiet Inner Work

To do the quiet inner work of becoming open is like stepping into an elevator that doesn't take you anywhere outside of the building – the structure – of your own life. Instead, it elevates you to a different level within that structure.

If you go all the way to the top, then you are on a level from which you have both the vista and the perspective to see exactly where this structure fits into, and is united with, all other structures. You see how it fits into and is united with the environment itself.

This is a perspective that reaches as far as your awareness can extend itself.

At this point, you begin to appreciate the unity, the interdependence, and the connection between all things – that is, the flow of that same energy that all things are. In that light, you start to understand differently both the material and physical limits of your existence, as well as its spiritual potentiality.

You can't do inner work on this level if you are always avoiding change, getting stuck in tensions, pursuing fulfillment through material achievements, or going for short-term solutions. You certainly can't do it if you are always getting tangled up in your fears.

The whole point of any inner work is to change and to grow. It is to understand that you don't have to live with the same fears, tensions, desires, frustrations, unhappiness, pain, and suffering.

At the same time, in saying that you don't have to live with these things, I don't mean that you get out of your difficulties by running away from them (even though the ordinary human being's reaction to a difficult situation is to say: "Get rid of it!")

Inner work isn't like that. Inner work doesn't mean denying, repressing, or escaping anything within yourself. Rather, it means opening within yourself to *all* the situations in your life, and going beyond your preconceived notions of "good" experiences and "bad" ones.

This opening of yourself allows you to become truly responsive and responsible in face of the work you have to do on every level. Then you are able to take from each situation the nourishment and energy necessary to lift you beyond the limits you thought you were.

If you can't go beyond your fear of change to open yourself and stay open to all the circumstances in your environment – the people with whom you live and work, as well as the people for whom you work – then how on earth will you open yourself to God?

Gratitude

I used to suggest to people that, actually, they should be grateful for whatever entered their lives. Then I found they were coming to me to say, "You know, now I feel *really* terrible because

I'm not feeling any gratitude." So I stopped saying it, because all they were getting out of it was one more reason to be miserable.

It's all right not to feel grateful every day. If you even feel awful on some days, I can understand that. What I don't understand is how a person can simply accept living with an ongoing lack of gratitude in his or her life – how a person can decide not to make the simple effort to find some cause for gratitude within. Once you find that, then

You choose.
This choice
begins within
your own heart,
through your quiet,
deep inner work
to bring out
a finer
and finer part
of yourself.

it's only a matter of opening yourself to it, nurturing it, and allowing it to blossom.

This effort is so simple that even children do it. It's when we grow up and become smart that we don't do it anymore. We think that it's too hard, when the truth is that it's not hard at all. Indeed, human beings are extraordinarily talented at making simple things complicated. We find it next to impossible to keep things simple, or to make a simple effort day after day, every day.

The Choice

Nevertheless, this is what quiet inner work calls for. It requires that you reach

into yourself – that you find the strength every day to lift up your own heart. This is your basic spiritual effort. This is the choice you make.

The world is a tremendous trap and a test. Every day, it gives you fifty million reasons to go crazy, to drown in pain and sorrow. And most of them are good reasons.

There are only two reasons not to go crazy: first, because being happy is a lot better than all the other choices, and second, because it is your right to choose.

The point is that you don't have to stay the same. It doesn't matter where you come from; it doesn't matter what your problems are. Of course, you can make a big deal out of them if you want to, but this will only feed them and guarantee that they dominate you for the rest of your existence.

We live in this world to learn how to bring our existence to life. If you are drowning in your fears, in your sorrows, in your desires, or in anything else, then you are not bringing your existence to life – you are only perpetuating the unhappy condition in which most people find themselves.

You Can Choose Life Itself

You choose. You can settle for existing, or you can choose change and Life Itself. Existence is free – everybody gets that much. What you make of yours is up to you. This choice begins within your own heart, through your quiet, deep inner work to bring out a finer and finer part of yourself.

When you choose to be happy, to grow, and to rise above the fears and tensions in your life, then you activate both within yourself and all around you the extraordinary power of love. You allow it to unfold its potential and to make something rich and extraordinary.

This effort totally changes your understanding and your vision. It allows you to take from Life and from everything around you that which is fine. From this, you slowly and steadily build a total transformation.

This total transformation is what we call Self-realization. It is the intimate and total experience of your connection with God. ■

WHISTLING A HAPPY TUNE

There's a song from *The King and I* that goes, "Whenever I feel afraid, I hold my head up high, and whistle a happy tune, and no one ever knows I'm afraid." I think that this is not a bad antidote for fear, or for any other kind of congested thinking. Thinking and bodily sensations – along with the mind and the body – are all part of one system. If you want to change the system, then you have to change its chemistry, or its vibration. The simplest way to do this is to be happy (or at least to feel some happiness), even if you have to invent a silly reason for it, or to fake it. Instead of allowing some heaviness to circle around in your head, redirect your attention and change the vibration – the tune – within yourself. In this way you change the feeling.

Feel into your heart – you can whistle a tune if you want – and feel around for a reason to sense something slightly sweet in there. Breathe into that sweetness, and continue to feel it circulate and expand until a real joy emerges. Breathe into that joy, and start to allow a simple love of life to emerge within you. Then, feel that, letting it flow inside you and around you.

Doing this will resolve every one of your issues, because you are no longer on the same level where getting stuck can even happen. Furthermore, when you really feel that fullness, there's no longer any issue of anything being missing, or of anything being there that shouldn't be; everything is simply all right. When you feel that fullness, you are in touch with yourself and completely responsible. Having dissolved the barriers to being happy, you become able to have a simple, pure, and complete interchange with everything and everyone in your environment. ■



EXCERPT FROM *THE BREATH OF GOD*, BY SWAMI CHETANANANDA.

Available from Rudra Press, P.O. Box 1973, Cambridge, MA 02238

Sculpture: Shiva, Southern India, 16th-17th centuries. Marianne Brimmer Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

THE THIRST FOR INNER GROWTH

—
BY RUDI

THE MIRACLE OF our existence is the fact that we as people sit together in incredible, abysmal ignorance of our potential. We have nothing in us that can understand how deep creativity is and how infinite the capacity is for every human being to grow. It isn't until we pass through the doorway of one dimension and go into another that we have a sense of rebirth and a sense of the difference. And so we play like animals in a mudhole, throwing at each other these little things that exist on one level. But growing is reaching from where you are into a totally different universe with different energies and different rules and, certainly, a different consciousness. And it is allowing yourself to take the nourishment from there. Growing is only that. It's only the taking in of nourishment, the feeling from inside yourself the same connection that is felt between a mother and child. It's an umbilical cord through which you draw in sustenance. This is basically what it is.

A STATE OF BEING

The real product of life is the ability to take our

creative force and raise it to a higher level continually. And so we live in an organic and very natural way; any change that takes place doesn't take place from your mind, it takes place strictly from this churning of your creative energy as you bring it around and around and around endlessly. From that you create, eventually, what is a state of being.

It is only when you get involved in the need to think, and the need to rationalize and emotionalize, that you really begin to understand the limitation of a person and you learn to understand the remarkable quality of a state of being. *It is.* And we continually try to understand something which is in the mind or in the emotions or somewhere within our physical body. But it is this detached energy, this state of being that really is remarkable. This state of being is really the first stepping stone into the cosmos because it allows you to remove yourself from everything of the earth and take in nourishment. From that you can then begin to attract on all of these higher levels.

There is nothing rational about spiritual work because spiritual work does

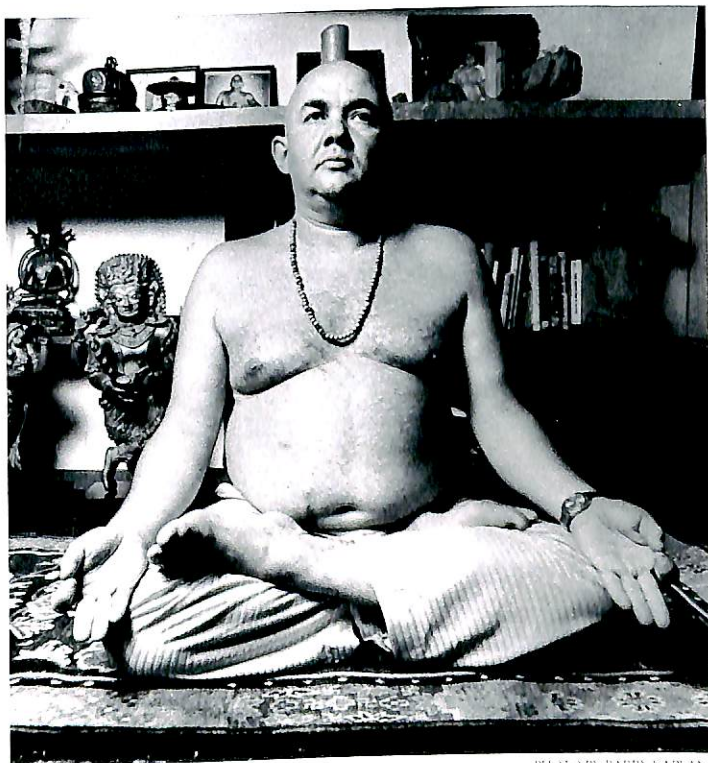


PHOTO BY BARRY KAPLAN

This article is excerpted from a talk Rudi gave on January 9, 1973. The complete talk is available on cassette from Rudra Press.

not exist in its true form on the earth. Its nature is that of a lighter and more refined energy. It has a different density; it exists in a different world completely. The only way you understand it is by the result that you have in your life, by the feeling you have of a connection that nourishes you and feeds you. You are not working correctly when you succumb to all of these tensions in your mind, all of the talking, all of the things in you that are trying to mutilate the energy. But to leave it alone, to work and drink it in and continually rise above yourself, that is the advantage of a state of being or a state of spiritual energy that is moving. Either we rise with it or we remain underneath it, stuck in the tensions of this physical life.

FIGHTING

When you fight then you are fighting inside yourself to not allow this energy in, to not allow it to be assimilated so that it can render from your being, you. And it is you who are the conflict; it is you who are really against your own growth. It is your ego, trying to fight for its existence, which makes a million stupid reasons. This is what allows you to attract a theater date on the night that you should come to class. Or that allows you to express your energy fighting with somebody because you will not open and absorb that energy and rise above the situation. There is nothing rational about fighting, because fighting and tensions only destroy creative energy. And the ability to fight, the inclination to fight, is only the unconsciousness in a human being who will not draw in the energy and rise above it. The same energy that is wasted externally, when drawn in and internalized, will raise you above the situation. Then you look and see that the situation is ridiculous. It's just ridiculous that we use our energy in any way except as nourishment and as growth.

It is only your work, it is only longevity, it is only the wish within you that qualifies you to grow. I lived with many, many saints in different parts of the world. I sat with them for weeks and months, doubting myself. And I'd look at them, and I'd think, "Who asked a question today? Who wanted?" Nobody. Nobody. And you can sit in temples all over the world, in Japan or in India or in China or anywhere, and you can hear the stupidity that goes on on a day-by-day basis. Nobody comes who has a wish inside. Nobody has their heart tearing apart within them because of their desire to find the growth that is available. It is only through that that you qualify; it is only through that that you express your wish. I am going to be forty-five years old

in two weeks, and I'm still burning inside. I still have this wish. It drives me crazy, this thirst inside to grow. And I can qualify. I can stand next to anyone, but who wants to measure oneself against anyone else? The only one to be measured by is God and the only thing to work towards is to get there.

DESTROYING THE PAST

It breaks my heart when I see people not wanting to grow, not reaching for that growth. Every day for me is a burning that I really in my heart and soul never wish to inflict on anyone else. But for me to serve, I have to completely destroy today everything that exists within myself from yesterday, and tomorrow everything from today, so that I don't crystallize, so that I don't become secure and think I've gone far enough to qualify for what somebody else calls enlightenment. I don't want that. I want to die open, and I want to go up. All of the intelligence, all of the crystallization, all of the intellectualism, all of the everything else can stay here and be eaten by those people who want to eat, like jackals, the truth of yesterday. It is only a dead truth.

Truth is the continual destruction within yourself of everything that existed one moment before. And if you have a need in yourself to hold onto anything, then you will not only not have realization, but you will not have within yourself the sense of service to other people. You will be a person who is offering death to other people because you don't have the capacity to go through the cycle of rebirth and death in yourself continually. Either you want to grow in such a depth

that you feel the cycle of death and rebirth in you at all times, or you don't qualify to really do this work.

We have undoubtedly the most difficult spiritual work that is available. And you have to make up your mind whether you really wish to grow, whether you really wish to surrender *you*, or you wish to hold on to six million extraneous things which haven't nourished anybody for ten thousand years. It is not the past that is needed, it is the *moment* that is needed, it is the capacity within you to assimilate the energy as it comes into the universe fresh. This energy has to go into you and root out everything in you that existed, not only in this life, but in every past life. The only thing I promise you is an extraordinary life, a very remarkable life. You will see, in yourself and in the connection that you have with other people, a very living and creative experience. It will break your heart thousands

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of times as you see, no matter how deeply people say they're looking, how extraordinary they are in their creative capacity to avoid finding. Most creative capacity in human beings is expressed by their unconscious ability to not find what they say they are looking for. It is unbelievable how people can make a stream that is a million miles long of coincidence to get them out of doing, and they can't cross the street to do. And that is what has continually destroyed people who say they wish to grow. They stop growing because they don't have within themselves the energy to sustain their search and their evolvment. It is really a dedication within yourself to reach towards this endlessness which has to do with our creative capacity.

We have to be like any other organic thing that lives. We have to live fresh every day. Not try to live in the past, but really open and allow this energy to come into us and allow ourselves to burn out whatever was. We take in this energy and loosen up deeply within ourselves. We free ourselves from this unconsciousness that's so strongly embedded within us, and we find that we can breathe. And we find that these chakras that we have are not limited to our physical body, but they really reach out into infinity and we can draw from thousands of years and millions of miles the energy that we need. Spirituality should not be so many words, it should be a living reality within ourselves that we can come to every single day. We can see our world expand, we

can feel every muscle within us open and it becomes a nourishment which frees us. It frees our heart, it frees our eyes, it frees our mind, it frees every chakra within us so that we're not the slave of these organs. We really are free to feed them and have them expand and have them flow one to the other and bring us the nourishment which allows us to get above the earth.

THE POWER OF A WISH

The best way to not be attached is to do exactly what I do: go into your heart and open, and any hurt or any

attachment that you have burns out. You take a breath inside and you say, "I really wish to transcend that attachment." You keep doing that and you will feel inside you whatever it is suddenly start to take fire and burn out.

See, a wish in a human being is extraordinary. It's an extraordinary property. It is so fine that it can soak through anything. It's so very fine, it can go through bone, it can go through skin, it can go through steel. It has a penetration like a laser beam.

And you keep wishing and wishing, and you cut right through into the deepest part of you. So that anything you're attached to, you can burn out completely, and then it'll reform without the attachment. It doesn't mean that you won't have, it means that you won't be attached.

When you have an experience, it means you have finally worked something to a point where it is beginning to chemically change. Then you should take it from first base to second base to third base and take it home. Why limit it? Why limit it at that point? We never work deep enough, we never work long enough, we never carry it to where it can do us good. If it is only in your heart, then when a shark comes your heart closes and all of it is wasted. You have to start all over again. It's as if you were mining and every time you want to get a handful of gold or silver you've got to dig a whole trench. But if you take the time to make a structure, you can go down any time you want and take out

what you wish. Any experience is only as good as your conscious ability to do it at will. You have to take the energy, bring it all the way down, and use it to nourish your whole system. What we do is react to situations, which is our body, our mind, our emotions telling us what is going on. Only a fool follows his mind. Only a fool follows his emotions. If you go the other way, you become free. And it's not to go towards anything except towards nourishment and growth, so that you feel that these things are your limitations. Then you work above it and you can encompass the limitations and you can burn the whole thing. ■



PHOTO BY BARRY KAPLAN

THE ROLE OF BALANCE IN HATHA AND IN HEALTH

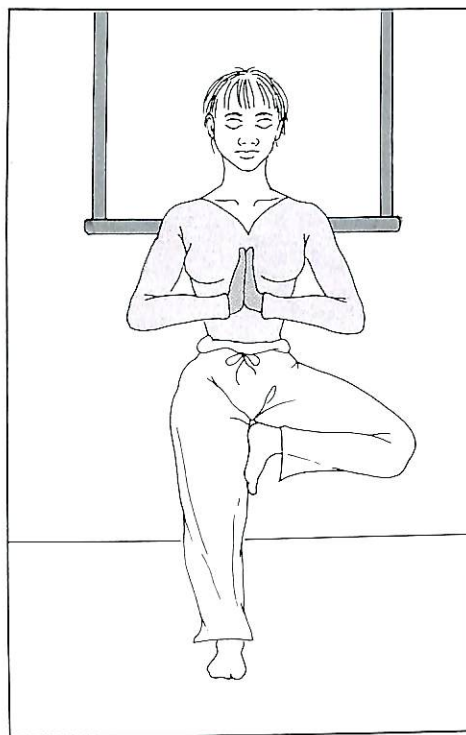
BY SHARON WARD

Close your eyes. Envision yourself at age eighty. What do you look like? Are you indoors or are you outdoors? Are you sitting up or lying down? Do you have a cane? How do you feel?

When Rachel Brooks (affectionately known as "Doc Brooks") and I presented a Health and Lifestyles Program to thirty members of the Institute recently, these questions caused responses ranging from giggles to shrieks. Some people saw dirt and potted plants above them; some were rickety and feeble; others were leading vibrant, vital lives. How did you feel?

In our Health and Lifestyles Program we work with a model for "total well-being." It posits four main points:

1. There is a reciprocally balanced relationship between physical health, mental health, and spiritual awareness.
2. "Health" is defined as a state of balance between these three aspects of our lives, and it is in this



Vrksasana

- balance that we experience total well-being.
3. Everything we do affects our well-being.
4. To achieve the balance which is total well-being one must live a simple, disciplined, and harmonious life.

Balance is the key to health or total well-being. In this regard it is important to recognize that, to a degree, health is an attitude. For example, a person without legs can be vibrant, well-adjusted, "healthy;" one does not lose one's health because a part of him (her) is gone. On the other hand, someone with a minor illness – an illness that is not life-threatening – can greatly inhibit the speed of his recovery by having an attitude of fear and anger and resentment. The additional stress that he creates doesn't allow health to manifest very easily. Balance comes from a simplicity, harmony, and discipline that have no room for a negative attitude.

Swamiji describes spiritual awareness like this: "In the same sense that breathing brings oxygen to the body and carries out poisonous wastes, our awareness of the divine force purifies. Just as breath is life to the cells, this divine force is the Life of a human being. It gives movement and strength, it brings inspiration and removes all obstacles." Spiritual awareness is the highest level of maintaining the balance

Sharon Ward, the Institute's Executive Director and a certified hatha yoga teacher, has studied with Swamiji for fourteen years.

necessary to experiencing total well-being. But there are other aspects that will greatly improve your ability to stay in that balance. For example, diet plays a dramatic role in our physical and mental health. When I eat chocolate I feel physically "hyper" and mentally agitated. When I eat oranges I suffer from malabsorption. When I eat butter I am consumed by instant sleep.

It is not my intention to write an article on nutrition; that is Rachel's specialty. Rather, I simply intend to alert you to the fact that the foods we eat have a great impact on us. We need to pay attention to that impact. Practicing discipline and simplicity in your diet will go a long way toward maintaining balance on the physical and mental/emotional levels.

Functioning carefully in this high-pressure world is a second way to work toward balance. The stress inherent in our jobs, in our environment, and in our personal relationships can be astounding. Driving in Boston is a major source of stress for me, for example; it is mentally and physically exhausting. We all have situations that cause us to feel stress. If we do not take steps to manage the stress we feel, two things happen: our peace of mind is disturbed, and eventually our physical health is affected in the form of distress, fatigue, and illness. Needless to say, disruptions in our balance on the physical and mental levels can adversely affect our spiritual awareness.

So what is a good yogi to do in order to find total well-being? We work to find the balance. As you might have guessed, I strongly recommend hatha yoga as a tool for helping to find and maintain that balance between body, mind, and spirit.

Balance is the goal of all hatha asanas. I will describe two asanas, *vrksasana* (tree balance) and *swastikasana* (auspicious pose) as examples of how to work toward balance in hatha and in your life.

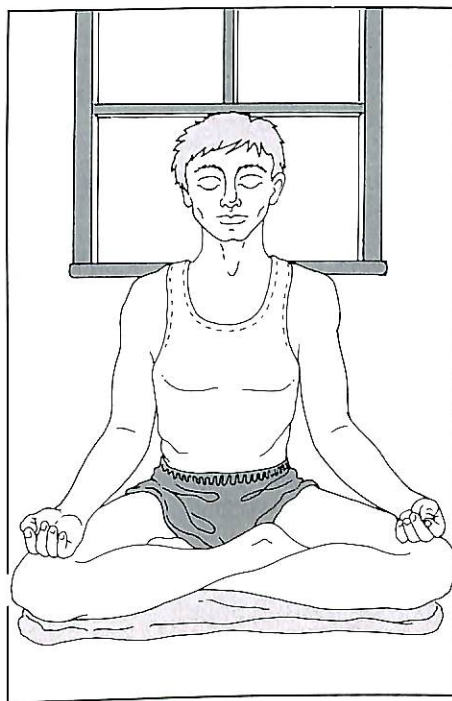
VRKSASANA (Tree Balance)

Vrksasana is a balance pose that will not only help to tone and strengthen the legs, but will work toward steadying the mind and developing concentration.

Begin in *tadasana* (mountain pose). Stand with your feet close together. Find

the point where the weight is balanced evenly. Find the point where your body is steady and comfortable and you experience the upward movement of your inner energy. Steady your gaze on a picture or some other stationary object.

Slowly shift your weight to your right leg. Pull up on the knee, making the right leg firm. Lift the right thigh and hip upward; don't allow the hip to shift out to the side. Slowly turn your left thigh outward and lift the knee. Grasp the ankle with your left hand. Place the sole of the foot high up onto the inside thigh of your right leg. Bring the heel as close to the pubic bone as you can. Try to



Swastikasana

feel for a muscle, called the *gracillis*, which runs from the pubic bone to the inside of the knee. You will know if your heel is pressing against this muscle; if it is, your foot will be able to press against the inner thigh and the inner thigh will be able to press back, allowing for a balance point. If your heel is not on the *gracillis* muscle, there will be discomfort in the inner thigh. Both hips should continue to face forward. Lift up from the base of the spine. Remember to keep the right hip firm, not allowing it to shift to the right.

If you can find your balance, bring your hands to *namaste* (fingers and palms together at the heart center).

Expand your chest without arching the lower back. Allow your shoulders to widen, place your forearms parallel to the floor. Keep the gaze steady. Concentrate. Feel the upward movement of your inner energy.

Hold for thirty seconds. When you do come out of the pose, do so gracefully and slowly. Do not collapse out of the pose. Repeat on the other side.

Notice the quiet. Notice the upward flow of your inner energy. Feel the balance between body, mind, and spirit.

SWASTIKASANA (Auspicious Pose)

Swastikasana is traditionally a posture for meditation. On the physical level it will loosen the hips, knees, and ankles. On the mental/emotional level it will help draw the energy inward in preparation for meditation. *Swastikasana* is a centering asana; with the legs crossed and the hands resting on the thighs, the pyramid-like posture provides a strong base from which the inner energy can rise.

Begin by sitting on the floor, in a comfortable, cross-legged position with your left leg outside of the right. Lean back and draw the feet under your thighs, as close to the body as possible. Come forward, clasp the right foot and lift it so that only the toes are tucked between the calf and thigh muscles.

Sit erect. Lift the spine upward, releasing it from the pelvic girdle. Feel the elongation. Roll the shoulders back, opening the chest and allowing the chin to lift slightly, as if you were taking a drink. Place your hands on your thighs, index fingers and thumbs gently touching, palms facing upward. Breathe softly, using a full yogic breath. Experience the upward movement of your inner energy from the base of your spine to the top of your head. Feel the total sense of steadiness and balance between your body, mind, and spirit.

Envision yourself at age eighty. You've taken steps to simplify your diet and to manage the stress to which you've been exposed. You've been practicing hatha yoga and meditation your whole life. Are you indoors or outdoors? What do you look like? What do you feel like? ■

FOOD ALLERGIES

Finding the Foods Right for You

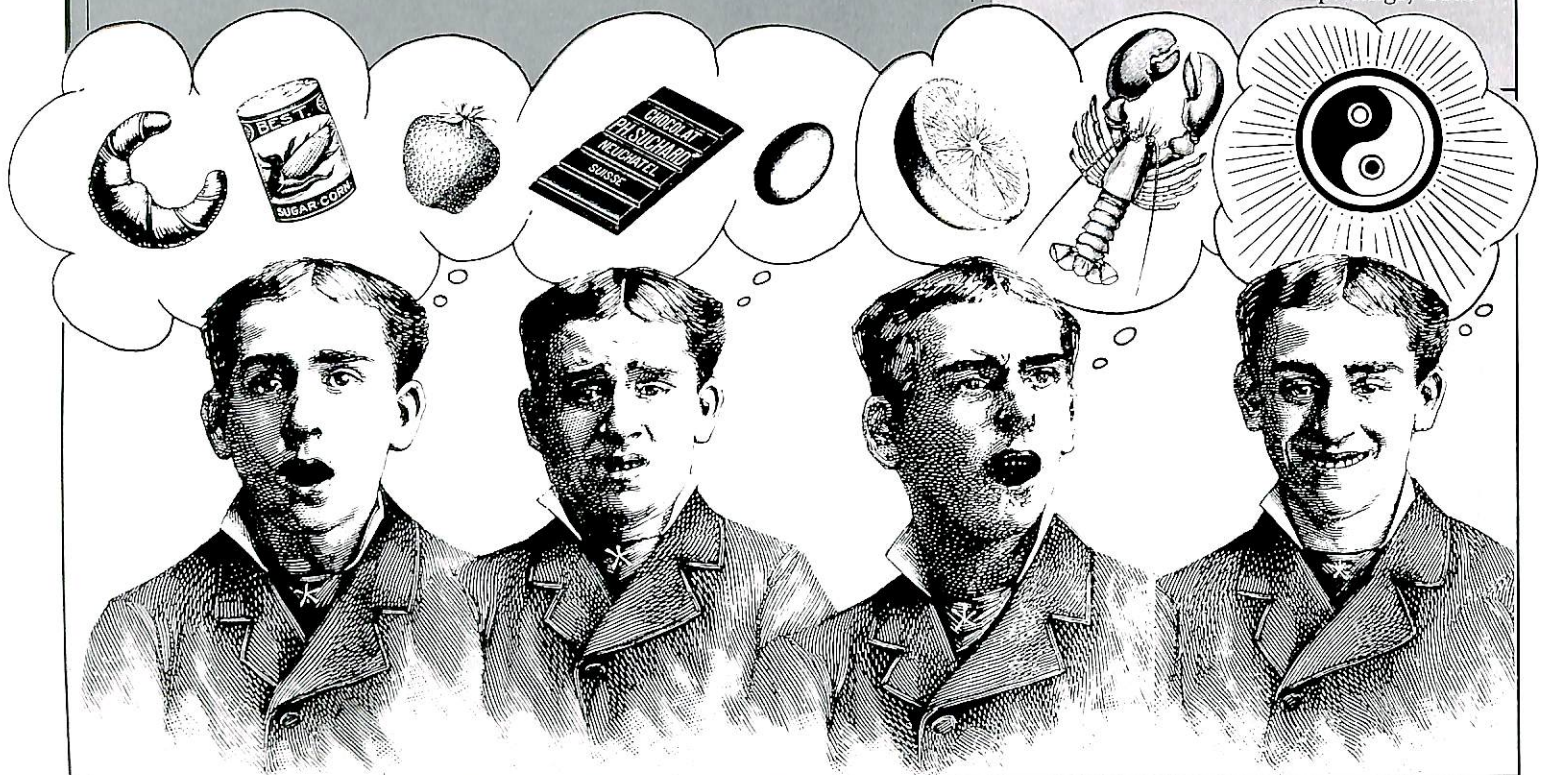
by Rachel Brooks, M.D.

In the first two articles of this series we covered many of the basic topics in nutrition and came up with a variety of suggestions for how to optimize your health. In all the discussions we emphasized the need to individualize: to take the general recommendations and then explore what is right for you. You might have found that you do better with a little more protein and less fruit, or that you can tolerate a modest amount of caffeine but you need more fiber.

In this article I want to go a step beyond considering categories of food and look carefully at what *specific* foods suit you best. To do this, we will explore the subject of food sensitivities or allergies. There is some controversy in medical circles as to what constitutes a food allergy. I will be using "allergy" in the broadest sense of the word, implying an intolerance or sensitivity to foods involving the immune system.

POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE

Food is a source of enjoyment; however, it can also be a troublemaker. We all know people can get hives or digestive upset from certain foods, but there is an additional – and surprisingly com-



Third in a series on nutrition derived from lectures given by Rachel Brooks at the Institute's Wellness Weekend in June, 1987.

Dr. Rachel Brooks is a specialist in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. She has been associated with the Institute for fifteen years.

mon – array of symptoms caused by foods. All of the symptoms I will describe can have other causes, but I have been continually amazed at the contribution that food allergies can make to them.

Probably the most common symptom is fatigue. This is both chronic, overall tiredness as well as very acute sleepiness. I myself was shocked to find out you didn't have to sink into a coma after lunch. Other common symptoms include headaches and joint and muscle pains. The headaches can be of any variety, including migraines. The muscle pains are usually found in the neck or back. Often it is a feeling of stiffness or soreness in the back, or a nagging tension across the shoulders or in the neck. Sometimes it is a full-blown muscle spasm. The joint symptoms range from mild aching to significant arthritis. Medical studies have demonstrated a connection between food and the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. Asthma, eczema, heart palpitation, and high blood pressure can also be triggered by foods. And, of course, every kind of digestive complaint can be caused by foods: constipation, diarrhea, gas, bloating, abdominal pain, and colitis.

There are also many mental states that can be traced back to some food intolerance. At one end of the spectrum can be irritability, nervousness, anxiety, and uncontrolled emotions. At the other end can be spaciness, inability to concentrate or think, and depression. In children this can show itself as behavior problems and difficulties in learning. The most common reports from people who stop eating the foods they are sensitive to is that they have more energy, and simply feel more even physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Who has food allergies? From my clinical experience, I believe almost everybody does. Some people have only a few, others are surprised to find their intolerance is widespread. For some, the symptoms are minor, for others, they can be quite debilitating.

How can we be allergic and not know it? We tend to blame the way we feel on other things because reactions to foods can occur many hours after a food is eaten and because the symptoms are often non-specific. Headaches are often blamed on tension, for instance. Tension may play a role, but it could also

be what you had for lunch. Or maybe you are always tired and depressed; maybe it's not your kids or your job, it could be something you are eating. Also, we don't suspect food because, as we shall see, it is the foods we eat most often that are the likely culprits.

We can have acute reactions to some foods, with the immediate onset of hives, diarrhea, or wheezing. These are the obvious food allergies and we naturally avoid these. But with "hidden" food allergies, because we are repeatedly exposed, our bodies try to cope. People ask, "How can I be allergic to wheat, I

As we continue feeding these chronic reactions, our symptoms can evolve. Finally the body can no longer adapt and some disease may develop. It is like a tire with 100,000 miles on it having a blow-out. We might say it was working just fine yesterday, but if we had observed closely we'd have seen a worn-out system.

What are the foods most likely to be causing an allergic response? Ten common ones are wheat, corn, soy, eggs, dairy products, citrus fruit, strawberries, peanuts, chocolate, and shellfish. You can see that many of these are the foods we eat regularly. In fact, we eat some of them even more than we think. As is the case with sugar and salt, foods like corn and soy end up in processed foods where we would not expect them. Reading labels can bring all kinds of surprises. Even foods we think of as healthy can be unhealthy for a given individual. We might think we are doing great with a breakfast of whole wheat bread and fresh squeezed orange juice, but we could be killing ourselves.

Are our food sensitivities fixed and unchanging? No, most often not. There are a number of variables that work to alter our sensitivity. These include the frequency with which we eat a food, how big a "dose" we eat, the number of different allergenic foods we are eating at once, and the state of our digestive and immune systems. Foods we eat frequently cause problems because of over-exposure. After staying away from these for some months, it is often possible to return them to the diet on a periodic basis. Other foods, however, we are just plain sensitive to; any time we eat them, now or in the future, they will cause trouble.

How big a dose of any given food we can tolerate also varies. For instance, some breads have egg in them yet many people with egg allergies can eat them without problems. On the other hand, even a little corn syrup in some processed food will cause a reaction in the highly corn-sensitive person.

Allergies can beget more allergies. The more allergy-producing foods we eat, the more sensitive to food we become. Say you are allergic to wheat and carrots. If you stop eating wheat, a major offender, you may well be able to eat carrots on occasion.

Common Food Families

Grass Family		
barley	corn	oat
rice	wild rice	wheat
rye		
Lily Family		
asparagus	garlic	onion
Mustard Family		
broccoli	brussels sprouts	cabbage
cauliflower	horseradish	kale
mustard seed	rutabaga	turnip
Carrot Family		
carrot	anise	caraway
celery	coriander	cumin
dill	fennel	parsley
parsnip		
Mint Family		
basil	bergamot	oregano
peppermint	spearmint	thyme
Potato Family		
eggplant	bell pepper	cayenne
chili	potato	tomato
paprika		

eat it every day?" What has happened is that we have developed a state of chronic reaction; the food allergy has become hidden. Instead of an immediate headache or muscle spasm every time we eat a food, maybe we feel run down all the time or have constant tension in our muscles. At some point we may have had a more acute and obvious reaction to these foods, but we probably didn't recognize it at the time and it is lost in the distant past. Or maybe as a child we were allergic to eggs, but we "outgrew" it. Some food allergies are outgrown, but others simply go into hiding, causing chronic reactions instead of acute ones.

Recent studies suggest a mechanism for this. Eating foods we are sensitive to causes irritation to the lining of the intestines, causing the digestive process to be impaired. Normally food is broken down into small basic units before it is absorbed from the intestines. When irritated, however, the intestinal walls become "leaky" and larger-than-normal elements are absorbed into the blood stream. Our immune system does not recognize these larger elements, so it responds to them as a foreign substance, leading to an "allergic" reaction.

This can explain why eating foods we are sensitive to makes us more likely to have a reaction to any subsequent food we eat. The absorption of these abnormal elements into the blood stream would also explain why food that goes into the digestive tract can cause symptoms in every corner of the body. Further explanations will undoubtedly be found as well, but for now, this is a useful way of thinking about the process.

SORTING IT OUT

So what can we do? There are a number of different tests available to help discover food allergies, including skin and blood tests. Each is of some usefulness, but each also has its limitations. They can be helpful as a starting point, but because of the inherent inaccuracy of any testing method, and the changing nature of these allergies, we must each become our own best tester.

We begin by observing ourselves carefully and honestly. Carefully, because at first the effects of foods are not obvious. Honestly, because the unfortunate truth is that it is often the foods we love the most that are the troublemakers. Not only do we love these foods, we are actually in some instances addicted to them. In the short run, they give us a lift and satisfy our craving, but in the long run they drag us down.

What is it we need to observe? First, it is helpful to identify some target symptoms. What problems may food be causing you? Review the list of problems food can cause and pick out the ones that apply to you. These are the ones to observe carefully. Notice if your headaches come at a certain time of the day. Do you always fall asleep after lunch? Maybe that soreness in your neck be-

gins with just a little tightening of the muscles between your shoulder blades or at the nape of your neck.

Once you identify your target symptoms, try to relate their occurrence to the foods you have eaten. Keep a food diary of what you eat for at least a week or two. The diary is a tool for tracking your symptoms along with the food you eat and looking for correlations. Recheck the list of ten common culprits, and also remember to consider things like spices (garlic and oregano are common offenders) and other additives (MSG is notorious).

While you are sorting things out, it helps to eat simply. If symptoms develop following an elaborate meal, what were you reacting to – the spices, the oils, something in the sauces? It is hard to say.

Making the connection between symptoms and food can also be tricky because the reactions to food can occur anywhere from immediately to 24 or more hours later. As long as the food is in your digestive system, it has the potential to cause trouble. Most commonly, the symptoms appear within eight hours. The after-lunch coma is probably related to what you had for lunch, often something common, like wheat. (Remember that things besides food allergies can cause this reaction; sugar and caffeine can do just the same.) If you wake up in the morning with a headache or a crick in your neck, think about what you had for dinner the night before. Did you eat something out of the ordinary – a big pile of shrimp or a whole quart of strawberries? Maybe you had Italian food and it is dawning on you that every time you eat it you don't feel quite right. It could be the garlic or the tomatoes. Finally, making the food/symptom connection is difficult because some symptoms are so constant (like fatigue or muscle stiffness) that it is hard to pinpoint specific foods as the culprits.

ELIMINATION DIETS

Are you having trouble sorting things out? If simple observation is not enough, you can test things more systematically by eliminating foods from your diet and then reintroducing them. This approach is based on the knowledge that if a problem food is removed from the diet for at

least five days and then reintroduced, the reaction to that food will be intensified. If you are drinking milk every day, it can be hard to see its effect. The body is coping with a chronic exposure and will work to dull the edge of any reaction. But take that food away for a time and when your body sees it again it is off its guard and a more obvious reaction can occur. The marked drowsiness you feel now may correlate with that general feeling of fatigue you always have. Or maybe the abdominal bloating that comes from that isolated glass of milk is the magnification of the poor digestion and gassy feeling you have learned to live with.

The basis of any elimination diet is to stop eating a suspected food for some time (at least five days) and then to eat a number of portions of that food and carefully observe the response. Sometimes just being off a suspected food for five days is enough to give you the answer. You already feel better and you don't have to eat it again to see how bad it can make you feel. But most of us like the confirmation anyway, since it may mean giving up a food we love.

There are two basic approaches to elimination diets. One is to take foods out one at a time, the other is to take everything out and then begin to reintroduce them in a step-wise fashion. In the first approach, you could make a list of foods you suspect or choose some from the list of common culprits. Stop eating corn or citrus fruit for five days and then eat it freely. The first bite may give you the answer or it may be that you just don't feel good at the end of the day.

Note here that our sensitivity to food often runs through a whole food family. If you are allergic to oranges, you could be sensitive to all citrus fruit. This can be helpful in tracking down suspects. Removing a whole family of foods at a time can make the picture clearer. The members of some families are obvious, like citrus, but others are not at all; for instance, mango and cashew are in the same family (see Chart).

The second approach involves getting onto a simple diet of low suspect foods and then testing out one food or food family at a time. One type of simple diet is to eat rice (a rare allergy) and vegetables for a week before you begin

your testing. Another method is to examine your food diary and pick out foods you eat once a week or less and make a menu of these as your baseline diet before testing. With any of these approaches, if you have a major reaction to some food, wait a day or two before testing the next food, so the effects don't overlap. Remember, allergy begets allergy.

In choosing between these methods, consider whether your personal style tends toward the gradual or "all or nothing" approach. Also, if you think you have a lot of allergies, or if your symptoms are very chronic and constant, then the second approach will work best for you. If you are having constant reactions to many foods, then the effect of a single food in the context of your regular diet may be too obscured to identify. The blip on the screen is easier to see when the background static has been cut out.

Does all this sound confusing? Probably, but most people find they can play Sherlock Holmes pretty well. If you can uncover even one or two persistent food allergies, you will eventually discover them all. With each one you uncover and eliminate, you are able to see just how food has been affecting you. You never guessed that edgy feeling came from something you ate. Now when you feel edgy, you can look back and see if there might have been a food trigger.

THE ROAD CAN BE ROCKY AT FIRST

Now that you have stopped eating the foods you are sensitive to, how do you feel? Hopefully great, but the road can be rocky at first. One source of trouble is that some of these foods are addictions. If you drink a quart of milk a day, it is no easy task to stop. You can experience symptoms of withdrawal and have cravings. But, like the process of cutting out sugar or caffeine, these feelings gradually subside and you begin to feel better. Many people report that they feel more in control of their eating on an allergy-free diet. We are no longer driven to eat by cravings.

Some people seem to get more sensitive and symptomatic than they were before they started. Maybe you used to

be able to eat a loaf of bread without any obvious difficulty, but now find you can't eat a single slice without a reaction, and not only wheat but a host of other things as well. Have you become more allergic? No, not really. There are a couple of factors involved in this.

For one thing, you are now more observant. You have made the link between cause and effect, food and symptom. You therefore notice both more reactions and more subtle reactions. You are also clearing out the background noise. There is less static from chronic exposure so those blips of reactions can be more dramatic. Another big factor is that you are no longer having ongoing chronic reactions. Your body, particularly the immune system, originally coped with the constant onslaught of allergens by adopting chronic symptoms. Now that every meal does not bring a challenge, your immune system can mount an appropriate defense when faced with a given problem food. The results are acute symptoms.

These acute reactions can be disconcerting and discouraging. You go to all this effort to be good; it hardly seems a fitting reward. Take heart, though, it really is a good sign. Your body is getting better; it is no longer so filled with garbage that it can't notice when a rotten egg is thrown into the pot. Also, these reactions should, over time, become less severe and less frequent as the state of your digestive and immune systems improve.

THE PROCESS CONTINUES

The discovery of knowledge about yourself and your allergies is an ongoing process. You may develop a sensitivity to some foods and lose others. Your symptoms may also change with time. Our bodies literally become a testing ground. We will discover for each particular food whether we can eat some or none of it, how often we can tolerate it, and just how it affects us.

Many people have been surprised to find that what they thought of as their basic personality traits turned out to be reactions to foods. Some who thought they were just nervous types, overly emotional, or slow in their thinking have had to reassess just who they are. It is an unsettling and exciting event.

What are the common pitfalls in this process? Remember to remain observant. Just because a food is a common culprit doesn't mean it is wrong for you. I know people who gave up wheat and began having oatmeal each day, and were wondering why they felt worse. Eventually, of course, they discovered that wheat was fine for them, it was oats they were allergic to.

Also, we can react to foods for a lot of different reasons. Fried foods can cause symptoms not because you are allergic to the oil, although that is possible, but because they are hard to digest. Chocolate may make you feel edgy. This may be an allergic response to chocolate or it could be the effect of sugar. Salt may cause you to retain fluid, but this has to do with the nature of salt and not allergies. If you are intolerant of almost all fruit, it may be pesticides you are reacting to.

Also, people have a tendency to go from overeating one thing to overeating something new. Instead of wheat toast for breakfast each morning, they eat oatmeal. It may not be too long before they are sensitive to oats.

Variety is the spice of life. It is also a good way to avoid developing food sensitivities, and managing the ones we do have. Because so many allergies are a result of overexposure, we can often tolerate foods if we eat them on a rotating basis. The standard approach to rotating foods is to not eat any food (or in some cases, family of foods) more often than every fifth day. If it's oatmeal on Monday, then it's no oatmeal again until Friday.

If you don't have many allergies, you can just eat a good variety of foods and leave it at that. If you have a fair number, then you would benefit from a rotation diet. It takes a little planning, but becomes routine after a while. If you are highly allergic you should rotate your foods more strictly and think about rotating food families as well. In any case, when you find you can safely reintroduce a food to your diet, be sure to put it back on a rotating basis.

Where are we now? Another step closer to achieving our optimal health. This step is a challenge, but it goes a long way towards allowing us to feel better and to function more effectively in all areas of our life. ■



The Breath *of* God

by Swami Chetanananda

GROWING

Growing is the most important and essential endeavor that a human being can undertake. You can make and lose money; you can be promoted and demoted in the world. Never, at any stage, is there any certainty about what will happen to you in this life. However, there is one thing that nobody can ever take away from you – the growth you attain through your own search for Self-knowledge. Furthermore, this growth and understanding become the foundation that sustains you through any and all worldly difficulties and that allows you – whatever the form of your physical experience – to find in life a continuously unbroken flow of total well-being.

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Nityananda Institute
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Cambridge, MA 02238

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